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Always happy: an ideal is reproduced and challenged in hairdresser vocational education and training

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ABSTRACT
In the hairdressing occupation emotional labour has often come to overshadow other vocational skills. The present study, using ethnographic methods, explores how students and teachers in vocational education and training (VET) for hairdressers in Sweden describe and explain the emotional labour being carried out when a hairdresser perform good service. The results show that to look happy and smile has a central position in students' and VET teachers' descriptions of how an ideal service worker is expected to act. A positive attitude and a special voice are other signs that characterise the hairdresser who provides good service. The happy ideal is both reproduced and challenged from students in the hairdresser education. One conclusion is that an ideal service worker reinforces femininity norms to act as a professional, which is in line with the requirements of the hairdresser education and the customer's and employers' expectations. At the same time, the happy ideal limits students' opportunities to challenge and question prevailing power structures, which is also part of the Swedish upper secondary school mission.

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KEYWORDS
Emotional labour; hairdresser; service worker; vocational education and training

Required:

Completed education; a skilled hairdresser's certificate and 2 - 4 years of vocational experience are of merit

We are looking for you who:

thinks working as a hairdresser is one of the best jobs there is and who is enthusiastic about providing good service. (. . .) We are looking for you who is happy, motivated, service-minded, and has a great passion for hairdressing.

(From an advertisement on www.ledigajobb.se)

The above text comes from a job advertisement where employers are looking for staff for a hair salon. Although a completed education is required and a skilled hairdresser's certificate are of merit, mainly skills other than crafts and education are emphasised in the announcement: to be enthusiastic about providing good service and to have a great passion for hairdressing. This is in line with research that has shown that work in the beauty industry requires skills, attitudes, and dispositions in relation to the customer that have come to overshadow other vocational competencies (Bredlöv 2018; Holmes 2015; Juul and Hvitved Byskov 2019; Sharma and Black 2001). Acting as the service-oriented service worker as sought in the advertisement involves not least, making the customers feel well taken care of and welcome through emotional expression (cf. Hochschild 2012).

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This article investigates how vocational teachers and students in vocational education and training (VET) for hairdressers in Sweden describe and explain the service relationship and the feelings the hairdresser is supposed to feel and show in relation to the customer. As stated above, the hairdresser student needs to develop skills, values, and attitudes besides crafts to become a service-provider and a hairdresser. A central aspect of performing good service is being able to regulate one's emotions, which has been much discussed in research ever since Arlie Hochschild during the 1980s in Hochschild (1983) showed how employees are trained to regulate their emotions in accordance with company commercial interests. In this context, Hochschild speaks of emotional labour. The service sector is a growing economy and industry, often associated with work that is routine with low qualifications and where the importance of various social and interpersonal skills are emphasised rather than formal qualifications (Nickson et al. 2003; Warhurst and Nickson 2007). Several studies have shown, however, that service work cannot be performed routinely according to a prepared script (Bolton 2009; Brockmann 2013). Much research has studied service training in workplaces, such as call centres (Callaghan and Thompson 2002), food retailers (Peccei and Rosenthal 2000), and airlines (Bolton and Boyd 2003; Petersson 2003). However, there are few studies that have been interested in emotional labour and ideas about good service in VET (Bredlöv 2021; Brockmann 2013). There are studies that specifically address emotional labour in VET as for working with children and social care under public auspices (Colley 2006; Vincent and Braun 2013), which are not operated according to economic interests in the same way as the service economy. In retail, Brockmann (2013) has shown how emotional labour is required of apprentices in England and Germany. Brockmann challenges ideas that service work should be routine and low-skilled. Nonetheless, how emotional labour and service are learned in school-based VET is sparsely investigated.

In this study, using ethnographic methods, we examine how students and VET teachers in school-based upper secondary VET for hairdressers in Sweden describe and explain the emotional labour being carried out when a hairdresser performs good service. Swedish VET is organised as three-year programmes, usually with 15 weeks of work-based learning when students are on placement. VET lies in a field of tension between learning in school and learning in the workplace. These have historically been separated and have developed different rationalities: a school versus a production rationality (Jørgensen 2004; Köpsén and Andersson 2017). In Sweden, VET is to a large extent characterised by a school rationality, even though employers in the 2000s have gained increasing influence, and concepts such as employability have received a more prominent position in policy (Köpsén and Andersson 2017; Nylund, Rosvall, and Ledman 2017).

Despite several attempts to even out the class and gender divisions in the Swedish education system, it has proved difficult to accomplish this in VET (Lappalainen, Nylund, and Rosvall 2019; Mellén 2021; Nylund et al. 2018; Panican and Paul 2019). VET largely reflects the gender-segregated labour market (Reisel, Hegna, and Imdorf 2015), and tend to reinforce traditional gender norms (Hedlin and Åberg 2013; Klope 2020; Ledman et al. 2021). In Sweden, ninety-six percent of the students in upper secondary VET for hairdressers are girls, and a majority of these have a working class background (Skolverket 2021). Studies have also shown shortcomings in girls' opportunities to gain knowledge about the gender order that characterises society and how life can be understood based on that knowledge (Klope 2020; Ledman et al. 2021; Rönnlund and Rosvall 2021). At the same time, VET, like all Swedish upper secondary education, has a gender equality mission which means that teachers must be agents that actively challenge existing gender norms and gender patterns (Skolverket 2011).

Previous research

When employers in service companies are looking for staff, emphasis is often placed on things as charisma, social competence, and a sense of service. A common notion is that service is not something that can be learned in education, but rather is based on innate qualities and how one 'is as

a person' (Petersson McIntyre 2016), that is, a description reminiscent of habitus (Bourdieu 1984). At the same time, students' learning in VET has been shown to be a process of becoming, where the VET aims to change the students who attend them (Colley et al. 2003). Colley et al. describe this in terms of vocational habitus, an orientation towards a certain identity and a sense of what makes 'the right person for the job', a process where gender and class have significance. Payne (2009) claims that it is not possible to describe service work as a vocational competence, because it is difficult to distinguish from ordinary human interaction. In a study of occupational orientations in Sales VET Reegård (2016) notices that it is difficult to describe and differentiate a professional sales assistant from a layperson. Petersson McIntyre (2016) argues, however, that service work differs from ordinary human interaction, because the service worker has a clear goal: to increase company sales. In addition, many employees' salaries are based on different commission schemes, which means that employees can receive financial benefits by performing good service. In Sweden, employed hairdressers have a commission on the sale of goods and services (Sveriges Frisörföretagare och Handelsanställdas förbund 2020). However, many hairdressers are small business owners, and hairdressing is the most common vocation for self-employed women in Sweden (SCB 2019). This means that the financial gain that the emotional labour can give often goes to the individual hairdresser.

Just as employers emphasise service aspects, many employees in the beauty industry emphasise the importance of service work rather than the crafts they are trained for (Bredlöv 2018; Holmes 2015; Juul and Hvitved Byskov 2019; Sharma and Black 2001). What is emphasised is an emotional labour with the aim to make the customer feel well and gain more self-confidence. For example, hairdressers in a study by Eayrs (1993) state that they do not so much try to make customers more beautiful as they work to make customers feel well (cf. Bredlöv 2018; Sharma and Black 2001).

It is common for hairdressers to state that customer contacts are the most positive aspect about the vocation (Cohen 2010). Research has studied how hairdressers negotiate their vocational identities in the interaction with customers. Gimlin (1996) shows how hairdressers position themselves as experts on beauty. Through emotional labour, however, they position themselves at the same time as friends or intimates, undermining the expert status. Sharma and Black (2001) show how vocational identities are negotiated with beauticians, who highlight the emotional dimension of their work and compare themselves with nurses and psychotherapists, namely, occupations with-relatively long education (c.f. Bredlöv 2018). However, these claims are undermined by the simultaneous reference to intuition and innate qualities as the bases for this competence.

Given that work in the beauty industry requires developed relationship skills, researchers have highlighted that the interaction between the performer and the customer is a particularly understudied area (Bredlöv 2018; Yeadon-Lee 2012). Toerien and Kitzinger (2007) claim that the service competence we expect from performers is taken for granted. The everyday nature of service competence makes it difficult to detect (c.f Reegård 2016). A particularly under-studied area is how the education of service workers in the beauty industry treats the interaction with the customer which is a large part of the vocational area. Colley et al. have argued that a central aspect of the students' learning is an orientation process for a certain identity that the vocational culture requires (Colley et al. 2003), something that is also emphasised in the Swedish curriculum (Skolverket 2011). From an educational perspective, it is important to investigate and discuss what it really means to be a service worker in a certain vocational environment and the skills, values, and attitudes that students are trained to develop within VET. Against this background, the aim of the article is to explore how students and VET teachers in Hairdresser VET describe and explain the emotional labour being carried out when a hairdresser performs good service.

Theoretical basis

Hochschild's (1983, 2012) theory of emotional labour forms the theoretical basis of the study. Emotional labour means that the employee is expected to control her or his emotions as part of the professional role in order to produce desirable emotions in those they interact with. Flight

attendants, for example, are expected to make passengers feel calm, well taken care of, and safe, while a bill collector should rather get those from whom they collect money to feel intimidated (Hochschild 2012). The theory uses the concepts *feeling rules*, *surface acting* and *deep acting*. *Feeling rules* are socially and culturally shared norms that prescribe how people should feel in different situations and relationships. They are most easily noticed in situations where we do not feel what we are expected to feel, for example, a bride who does not feel happy and joyful on her wedding day (Hochschild 2012). All people learn numerous feeling rules that can vary depending on the society and family they grow up in. In many service occupations, employers regulate feeling rules for employees whose work includes drawing out desirable emotions to produce added value for the company (Hochschild 2012). To produce the emotions that feeling rules prescribe, people make use of the strategies *surface acting* and *deep acting*. In a service occupation, surface acting can mean showing joy and smiling, despite the employee does not feel happy. By deep acting is meant instead that the employee evokes the emotions that the employer and the customer want. Instead of a glued-on smile, deep acting means that the service worker succeeds in really feeling happy and the smile appears to be 'real'. This is an aspect of appearing as a professional in service occupations. In this article, we are interested in and analyse these feeling rules and what they can mean in a hairdresser education context.

The notion of emotional labour was developed from a Marxist-feminist theoretical framework. In the same way that the industrial worker could become alienated from the body that made goods in the production society, Hochschild (2012) argues that service workers can become alienated from their emotions when they perform service. When the employees perform service, they use feelings in order to produce the proper state of mind in the customer. The emotions of the service workers are owned by the company and are sold, since to induce the desirable feelings is part of the job and the product that is sold to the customer. In relation to this specific study, it is important to point out that many hairdressers in Sweden are self-employed and Cohen (2010) claims that self-employed hairdressers do not perform emotional labour. Self-employed hairdressers are not controlled by an employer who profits from their emotional work: their company profits accrue to them, and thus they cannot be alienated (Cohen 2010). However, the students participating in this study are being trained to become employed hairdressers at first. To become a qualified hairdresser according to the union and hairdressers' industry in Sweden, they need to get employment as a trainee for approximately two years before they can become self-employed (Sveriges Frisörföretagare och Handelsanställdas förbund 2020).

Working as a service worker involves being subordinate to the customer, and the unequal relationship is affected by materialistic conditions, because the customer pays the company and the service worker for being nice, helpful and accommodating. Besides the materialistic conditions, perceptions of what constitutes appropriate service are affected by status relations, including gender hierarchies. Even though both women and men perform service and emotional labour the demands are often higher on women, because the display of emotions is an integrated expectation of gender-stereotyped 'women's work'. Performing good service has connections to feminine-coded qualities, such as being focused on the needs of others and being willing to serve (Hochschild 2012; Connell 2009). In addition, women are expected to be able to manage and control their emotions better and more often than men (Hochschild 2012). When women work and carry out service, it is often seen as an expression of an inherent femininity (Adkins 2001; Connell 2009; Hochschild 2012; Petersson McIntyre 2016). A woman judged to be insufficiently service-oriented or caring, risks being perceived as extra negative, because she also behaves 'unfeminine' (Connell 2009).

Material and methodology

This study explores how students and VET teachers within Hairdresser VET describe and explain how good service ought to be performed in hairdressing. The article is based on a study by one of the authors during her Ph.D. work (Klope 2020). In the ethnographic study (Hammersley and Atkinson

2007), she examined how adolescent girls in VET for hairdressers in Swedish upper secondary school negotiate and perform (vocational) identities from a class and gender perspective with a special focus on femininity.

Two different VET classes in two upper secondary schools were followed during Years 2 and 3, for a total of six months, conducting participant observations in classrooms during VET-courses and student breaks. The schools were chosen due to their long experience of educating hairdressers, and because they have a good reputation in the Swedish hairdressing industry. The classes consisted of all together 25 students. All these were offered to participate in the study, and 20 students agreed to take part in both interviews and observations. The students that did not agree to take part have not been interviewed, and during the observations, the researcher avoided observing these students. If some of the students that did not participate in the study initiated talking or asking questions to the researcher, she answered the questions and talked to the students, but she did not contact them or initiate any conversation with them. These students were not included in any fieldnotes.

The participating students were 19 females and 1 male; no one identified themselves in another way. The students were between 17–20 years old and had a working class background, which is also the general picture in Swedish VET (Skolverket 2021). The teachers in the study were working at these schools. They were highly qualified hairdressers and experienced VET teachers, all females.

The participants were informed of the purpose and design of the ethnographic study through written and oral information, emphasising that participation in the study was voluntary and that data would be treated confidentially. The participants confirmed with written consent. The study has been carried out in line with the ethical rules and guidelines stated by the Swedish Research Council (2017).

Data consists of three empirical materials: participant observations, individual semi- structured interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) with students and a focus group interview (Wibeck 2010) with VET teachers. Approximately 65 participant observations were carried out.

The length of the observations varies between 30 minutes to complete schooldays and were concentrated to the course activities in the VET classroom, which included different elements such as interacting with customers, practising hairdressing at mannequin heads, attending lectures by VET teachers etc. Five VET-teachers from the participating schools were interviewed in a focus group. The focus group interview intended to give the teachers the opportunity to reflect and develop their reasoning (Wibeck 2010).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. They were conducted in Swedish, and the excerpts in this study have been translated into English. Interviews with teachers and students were conducted at the end of the fieldwork. In ethnographic research, analysis begins during the fieldwork (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). In this study, the researcher who carried out the fieldwork had identified during the participant observations that the importance of providing good service to the customer was emphasised. Therefore, questions during the interviews were asked about what it means to be a good service provider in Hairdressing VET.

For all the empirical material – participant observations, individual semi- structured interviews, and the focus group interview – we carried out a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). In the analysis we coded the results in relation to the purpose of the article and the research question as well as theoretical concepts.

In the following section, we will present our findings, and the themes we identified through our analysis where we focus on how students and VET teachers describe and explain the emotional labour being carried out when a hairdresser perform good service and what skills, values, and attitudes that students are trained to in order to be a good service worker. The findings are presented in one overarching theme ‘Always smile and look happy’ and three sub- themes; ‘Positive, smiling, and outgoing; no stoneface’, ‘Fake the service role until it is genuine’ and ‘The happy ideal is described as unnatural’.

Always smile and look happy

The smile occupies a central position when VET teachers and students describe how a good service worker ought to act towards customers. Smiling, being positive and showing that you have social skills are signs that characterise the hairdresser who provides good service. If the students do not feel happy, they are encouraged to pretend to be happy until it feels genuine. Although the ideal of smiling and looking happy is reproduced in the Hairdressing VET, it is also met with resistance.

Positive, smiling, and outgoing; no stoneface

When the issue of service comes up, both VET teachers and students emphasise the importance of smiling and communicating verbally and with body language. A student who is good at service is described in a focus group with VET teachers as a person who seeks eye contact, smiles, is outgoing, and who extends a greeting:

> **Interviewer:** What distinguishes the kind of student who is good at service?
>
> **Carola:** Well, then I would say that they have no problem looking someone in the eye. Smiling. Saying 'hello'.
>
> **Katrin:** Being positive when you get a task.
>
> **Carola:** Exactly! Yes, really have it in you, what could you call it . . . yes, social skills.
>
> **Katrin:** Yes, in an outgoing way.
>
> **Jessica:** Energetic.
>
> **Katrin:** If I say something, for example, 'What do you think or how are you today?' 'Yes, I feel fine!' [spoken with a happy voice].
>
> **Carola:** Exactly, then answer.
>
> **Katrin:** 'How are you today?' 'Fine', and she smiles. Not everyone does this. Some students have a stoneface and says nothing.
>
> (VET- teachers, focus group interview)

The VET teacher Carola says that those who are good at service have it in them, what she calls social skills. Social skills encompass looking happy and saying that they feel fine, i.e. not complaining. A student who is good at service is also described as someone who takes initiative and radiates self-confidence. The fact that the students have it 'in them' from the beginning means that service is described as something that the students have been trained in from their families and from previous school experiences and peer relationships, or as something that some are born with from the beginning.

The opposite of this is a silent student who has a stiff or non-existent facial expression, a 'stoneface' that communicates neither verbally nor with body language. In an educational context like this, it is particularly interesting that when some teachers in the above quote are to give examples of a student who is good at service, it is done not in relation to the customer, but rather to a VET teacher. Even if the customer is not physically present, she or he is accordingly considered to be symbolically present. Rehn and Eliasson (2015) show similar results, stating that VET teachers in the Health and Social Care Programme not only assess students' vocational skills in relation to how they act towards patients and social care recipients, but also judge how they behaved towards their classmates in school. A student who did not treat her classmates according to the teachers' ideas of the ideal assistant nurse was considered unsuitable for the vocation. Some VET teachers' perceptions of the ideal assistant nurse appeared as part of an inherently stable, unchangeable identity. However, the present study shows that acting as the ideal service worker can be perceived by VET teachers as

something the students are expected to be able to do already, but also something that they are trained to do in the VET, which is shown below.

Fake the service role until it is genuine

In the focus group, VET teachers also describe that a lot of work and training may be required to acquire service competence and agree that it is not easy to teach service competence.

> **Interviewer**: Some students say it feels false in the beginning?
>
> **Katrin**: Yes. I mentioned that today!
>
> **Jessica**: They think that 'You can't pretend and play happy when you're not'.
>
> **Carola**: 'Fake it until you make it!' I say [laughs].
>
> **Katrin**: Yes, exactly [laugh].
>
> **Carola**: That is also included in our courses to talk about service and that you must take on the role until it becomes part of you. I always say that they should not play anyone else. They should be themselves, but they may have to work on certain pieces. If you know yourself that you never smile, then you must work on that so that you *smile* a little more.
>
> (VET- teachers, focus group interview)

A student who does not smile much is encouraged 'to work on certain pieces' such as to smile more. This includes evoking desirable emotions, to feel happy for real. If students say that it is false to smile when they do not feel happy, they are asked to pretend to be happy until it appears genuine; 'Fake it until you make it'. 'Fake it' can be understood as first playing happy without feeling happy, which corresponds to Hochschild (2012) concept surface acting, and 'make it' is regulating emotions so that you pretend not only in front of the customer, but also for yourself, which is how deep acting is described by Hochschild. Carola describes it as a role that the student must take on until it becomes part of the student 'herself'. Consequently, students are encouraged to be 'themselves', but not just any self. Instead, they are encouraged to practice a service role so that the role gradually appears as expressive (cf. Petersson 2003). Thus, not just looking happy, but also evoking the feeling of being happy. The desirable self is accordingly one who has played the service role so that it appears genuine both to the customer and to oneself. Smiling appears as something obvious and seldom or never questioned by some VET teachers.

In a similar way as in the excerpt above, the student Linda describes service as stepping into a role:

> **Interviewer:** You said you step into a role. Can you tell me about that?
>
> **Linda:** Well, there you must be proper. You got to smile even though you are *angry*. You must knuckle under. Even if you don't think the customer is fun, you *have to*.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you have to do?
>
> **Linda:** Shape up and smile!
>
> (Hairdresser student, individual interview)

Linda talks about taking on a role where she smiles, knuckles under, and shapes up even if she feels angry. She acts on the surface to show the emotions that the customer expects. Refusing to smile does not seem to be an option for Linda. Other students no longer talk about faking, knuckling under, and smiling without feeling happy. They have succeeded in evoking desirable emotions like they love their work and customers. One example is how Vendela talks about how she views hairdressing:

Vendela: I have really grown into it, and I *love* it so much right now. I think it's awesome!

Interviewer: But what was it that *attracted* you to become a hairdresser?

Vendela: Mostly it was customer service! Meeting people. It feels like it is so wonderfully *happy*! Sure, there might be a bit of a fake smile, but you are still happy on the job. (. . .) You are glad, and you do something for someone else.

Interviewer:'Fake smile' you said, what does that mean?

Vendela:[laughs] It is when you work in the salon and then the customer comes in and you just say, 'Hello, hello and la, la, la' [light, happy voice] and you fabricate your voice. And of course, you cannot just say, 'Hello! Welcome' [few words, with a deeper voice]. Even if you do not know the customer, it is as if you are so very happy all the time. But in the beginning, I remember, 'But should I change the voice that much?' It felt so very fake.

(Hairdresser student, individual interview)

What attracted Vendela above to hairdressing was the happy service interaction with the customer, even if she initially experienced it as false to look happy and smile all the time. Besides the smile, Vendela describes how the students should speak in a cheerful, high pitch, which she in the beginning felt was fake. Now she describes a cheerful voice as well as the smile as something obvious, because being and looking happy are aspects of performing good service.

The cheerful voice is achieved by things as encouraging the students to smile when they answer the phone to sound happy and accommodating, something that previous studies have noticed in the training of flight attendants (Petersson 2003). Cameron (2000) describes how 'a smiling voice' in service interactions can be regulated by what she calls 'styling'. When the students greet the customers in the school salon, they also welcome them in a higher pitch than usual, in the way that Vendela demonstrates. That Vendela is expected to fabricate her voice, as she expresses it, is a way to strengthen femininity and a subordinate position in relation to the customer regardless of that person's gender. Research that has compared women's voices over time has shown that women now generally speak with a lower pitch than in the 1940s (Pemberton, McCormack, and Russell 1998). A deliberate manipulation of the pitch to suit a particular image, such as the hairdresser, should therefore be understood in relation to its social and cultural context. Hairdressing students are trained to enhance femininity by speaking in a high pitch. Studies have also shown that a high pitch position for women makes them judged to be more sympathetic, while women who speak in a lower tone are perceived as less feminine and 'likeable' than women who speak with a higher pitch (Krahé and Papakonstantinou 2020).

Vendela also describes how she has grown into hairdressing and that now she 'loves it so much'. The feelings that are generated are not only in relation to the customer, but also to the vocation. She points out that as a hairdresser, she does something for someone else, which gives her joy and meaning. Being focused on the needs of others is in line with traditional femininity norms (Connell 2009). It is also behaviour which agrees with the 'caring self' that Skeggs (2000) describes young women are trained for in nursing education and which is also emphasised in other studies of work in the beauty industry (Bredlöv 2018; Sharma and Black 2001).

The importance of loving the job can be understood as an aspect of the emotional labour where 'Seeming to "love the job" becomes part of the job; and actually trying to love it, and enjoy the customers, helps the worker in this effort' (Hochschild 2012, 6). According to Hochschild this is an example of how companies offer employees an identity to adapt to increase the company's profits. In VET research, both Brockmann (2013) and Reegård (2016) challenge this assumption and argue that emotion management can provide VET students positive image and a sense of being professional. Even though hairdressing is spoken of as tiring, it is common to talk about the vocation with feelings such as passion and love (Klope 2020). Petersson McIntyre (2016, 2014) explains this as a way to present oneself as successful in a neoliberal age when it is considered desirable to love one's work. She argues that loving one's job is both a requirement, but also a process that gives service workers

a sense of meaning, which can be reinforced by the fact that people who do not love their job today are often themselves considered to blame. In this way, Vendela's way of talking about hairdressing and customer service as something she loves can be interpreted as a way to act in the subordinate position of service work where she positions herself as successful and accomplished.

The happy ideal is described as unnatural

Some students find it easy to act according to the feeling rules that are emphasised in the VET. Others challenge the acting according to the service role trained in the Hairdresser VET. Anna is a student who resists the happy manner that her VET teachers describe good service requires. She calls the acting unnatural. With a critical tone, she explains that her VET teachers want the students to be excessively positive and happy:

> **Interviewer:** You said that the teachers would like you to be like they are? And what are they like then?
>
> **Anna:** Unnatural, I would like to say. They want you to be *positive* and you should be *happy*. Of course, you should be happy, but not with your eyes drooping very tired and the mouth up to the ears because you are so incredibly happy [sounding critical]. It's not natural … So, yes, they are unnatural, I think.
>
> (Hairdresser student, individual interview)

Anna describes the gladness and positivity as a demand from her VET teachers. That the eyes droop at the same time as her VET teachers smile and look happy, Anna feels is unnatural. She therefore does not assess the teachers to be happy, but that they are acting on the surface. In a similar way, the student Frida reasons about the supervisor at her practicum placement:

> **Frida:** Yes, Annie [supervisor at the salon] is *always* happy, and it's annoying.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is it annoying that she is so happy?
>
> **Frida:** Yes [laughs]. Or it feels like that, yes, you *cannot* be so happy all the time.
>
> (Hairdresser student, individual interview)

To always be happy as Frida's supervisor is, Frida finds provoking. Feeling rules about how good service should be exercised interact with femininity norms, such as that girls are expected to and should be happy, something that is strengthened, encouraged, and presented as a requirement in the VET. With the observations, it was also clear that VET teachers in this study, especially when there were customers in the school salon, smiled a lot, spoke with a happy and enthusiastic voice, and acted as role models for the students. Even when the students practised on mannequin heads, they were expected to look happy and take on the job tasks with joy. Anna says in an interview that her teachers want her to be 'lively and alert and you should almost … "Hooray!" [artificial voice]', even if the tasks in school were boring. Feeling rules for good service workers in hairdresser education are thus not limited to the interaction with the customer. The instruction can therefore be seen as a way of regulating the students' identities to agree with a vocational culture and vocational identity. Yet, these examples show how some students distanced themselves from, and did not identify with, the conceptions of how a good service worker should act. The training to regulate the students' feelings is particularly interesting, because it is not a company that directs and regulates this, rather it takes place in school-based VET. In this, students are trained to make themselves attractive for a potential employer to hire and to become successful as self-employed, since many hairdressers have their own businesses.

There were also occasions during instruction that some VET teachers explicitly said that hairdressers must smile in front of customers. One student, Evelyn, tells how her VET teachers encouraged students who did not smile enough to smile more. Evelyn tells how she thought it was wrong to smile when she felt angry:

> **Evelyn:** The teachers said, 'You can smile a little more!' And I said: 'No, I'm not going to smile, because I'm angry!' 'Yes, but you have to smile!' [imitates the teachers in a sour voice].
>
> (Hairdresser student, individual interview)

The resistance that the students above say they felt when faced with smiling and looking happy in front of customers resembles what Nixon (2009) describes that young working class men feel in regard to working in the service industry; however, these men describe that they *cannot* smile, especially if a customer is unpleasant. Nixon provides an explanation for this by referring to class and gender. Working class men, in contrast to women from working class backgrounds, often have been able to draw strength from their working class backgrounds (Skeggs 2000). Nixon describes how the men appreciated being able to swear, joke with each other, laugh out loud, and shout at each other, which they also emphasised to have fun and relax. Nevertheless, it is not only working class men who distance themselves from the happy service worker. Even girls in the Hairdresser VET had difficulty identifying with the happy smiling service worker. Ambjörnsson (2004) has previously described how girls with a working class background in the Child and Recreation Programme neither recognised themselves nor wanted to identify with the feminine middle class ideal offered in the VET. Gender and class can thus function as both limiting and helping categories when good service is to be learned. At the same time, it is riskier for a woman not to smile and be accommodating and pleasant, because doing so goes against conventional femininity norms. Some VET teachers describe the students who do not smile and who resist as 'immature' or 'poorly brought up':

> **Katrin**: Today we are trying to turn the student towards a service-mind, instead of an immature and spoilt mind. When we think of a student that is positive and happy and ahead, we nowadays call well brought up. Then we say that 'She is well brought up' (. . .) The hairdresser students were much more well brought up before. Now it's more: 'I get to say what I think. I get to whine a little. And I have much less patience. I think things are unfair. I say, No'. And that does not go well with a customer.
>
> (VET teachers, focus group interview)

A student that the VET teacher Katrin, describes as good at service is a student who adapts, does not question, and who behaves 'well brought up' since the good service worker is expected to subordinate oneself to the customer. To hold oneself up, one's own opinions and feelings, as some students tend to do according to the VET teacher Katrin, is to act contrary to the appropriate behaviour. It is also not appropriate to talk about things being unfair, as service workers should be happy and positive, lack of fairness is an unfit topic of conversation. The good service worker appearing in the description is thus someone who holds back her own opinions and feelings and who clearly submits to the customer and act in accordance with traditional middle class femininity (cf. Ambjörnsson 2004; Skeggs 2000).

In the description of the immature and poorly brought up student, age also appears to have significance. The poorly raised student is described as the potentially good service worker; it is in her but has not come out yet. The description of being 'immature' indicates that the ability for good service is something that exists in the person and that this grows by itself with time. One way to understand the emphasis on acting mature and well brought up is that this is to perform expected femininity norms. Hellman (2010) shows that behaving big and mature is an ideal for both children and teachers in preschool. When teachers describe and praise children for being mature, the children act in line with gendered norms. For example, if a girl helps a teacher, she is often praised for being a 'big and good girl', and when boys lift heavy things, they are praised for being 'big and strong'. The reference to students being immature is also in line with a developmental psychological perspective that the immature students will mature over time and that this maturity involves becoming increasingly social (cf. Cunningham 1998).

Discussion

The aim of the study was to explore how students and teachers in the VET for hairdressers describe and explain the emotional labour being carried out when a hairdresser perform good service. The results show that the good service worker should reinforce femininity by smiling and looking happy, being adaptable, controlled, enthusiastic, and not talking about what is fair or unfair. The smile and to look happy are central to appearing as a good service worker.

In VET teachers' description of a student who acts as a good service worker, there is a picture of a student who has been trained in how to act in accordance with feeling rules for hairdressers before they start the VET. Such a student is described by some teachers as 'having it in them'. Here, a service worker appears as a well brought up girl who is happy to oblige, that is, who acts in line with conventional middle class femininity (Ambjörnsson 2004; Skeggs 2000). This resembles what has been called 'the new girl', as in middle class girls who act confidently, are forward-thinking, and are successful in school (Holm 2008; Öhrn 2002; Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody 2001). In this description, how to be a good service worker does not appear to be primarily something that is learned in the VET, but rather as something that was learned before entering VET in family and peer relationships.

On the other hand, both VET teachers and students describe how students are explicitly trained to appear as a good service worker by being encouraged to smile and to speak in a cheerful voice to attract and please customers, that is, to reinforce femininity. The students describe clear requirements for acting in accordance with the feeling rules that shape good service and how they adhere to, learn, but also challenge the feeling rules for good service. In the focus group with VET teachers, the feeling rules for how a good service worker should feel and act seem to be more unreflective. One way to interpret this is that they themselves have acted as service workers in customer interactions for so long, that in line with Hochschild (2012) reasoning, they are deep acting, that is, they have manipulated their emotions so that they appear as natural and 'genuine' in customer interactions. To achieve such acting, students who do not smile enough are encouraged to play a happy and feminine role so that in the end it appears as they themselves, that is, expressive and genuine. As Colley et al. (2003) have described students learning in VET is a 'process of orientation to a particular identity, a sense of what makes "the right person for the job"'. (p 488.), i.e. a vocational habitus that regulates student behaviour. This study indicates that the regulation of the feelings for a hairdresser to always look and act happy is strong in the VET for hairdressers.

Given that the students in Hairdresser VET generally are girls from working class, the VET for a service worker can be considered as an example on how girls are trained to dis-identify themselves as working class (Skeggs 2000) to attract both employers and customers, because appearing in accordance with middle class norms has become required in many sectors of the labour market (Walkerdine 2003). Instead of training VET students to understand power relations and how to exert agency they are trained to manage their emotions and to subordinate themselves in relation to the customer (c.f Rönnlund and Rosvall 2021). The students are trained to regulate their feelings to fit the customer's and employers' expectations. The position of the good service worker means to a large extent to strengthen femininity norms to appear as the ideal hairdresser and service worker. It is a way to appear as professional in line with the requirements of the Hairdresser VET as well as the employer's and the customer's expectations. It is also in line with recent years' emphasis on employability in VET policy (Köpsén and Andersson 2017; Nylund, Rosvall, and Ledman 2017). Important for these expectations is the materialistic reality where the hairdresser interaction with the customer is based on an economic transaction. At the same time, the stress of employability limits students' opportunities to challenge and question prevailing power structures, and this latter aspect is also part of the mission of Swedish upper secondary school.

It needs to be acknowledged that hairdressing is an occupation where many women become self-employed and as such, the hairdresser students are the ones that will profit from the emotion work that they are trained to carry out (c.f. Cohen 2010). In that light the feeling rules the students learn to perform in the hairdressing VET could be regarded as a way to empower young women to become

their own employer. Previous research on girls in hairdresser VET has shown that they are being trained to act like entrepreneurs irrespective if they will work as employed hairdressers or become self-employed (Klope 2020). One problem is that when students are trained to become entrepreneurs in feminine-coded settings such as service work in the beauty industry, the students are also held accountable for successes as well as failures in the labour market (Bredlöv 2018; Klope 2020). From an educational perspective, it is important that VET offers girls opportunities to gain knowledge about the gender order that characterises society and how life can be understood based on that knowledge (Klope 2020; Ledman et al. 2021; Rönnlund and Rosvall 2021). When it comes to VET and emotional labour, it seems reasonable that learning to perform good service also should include knowledge about the materialistic conditions that shape the interaction with customers. This study, however, show that students do not passively adapt to the feeling rules or subordination in relation to the customer and future employers, but also challenges the ideals of always being happy.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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